Father Charles Arnaud, O.M.I. — Mission du Saint-Esprit, Lac Mistassini — 17 August 1879

(From the field journals of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate)

“Today I completed my transcription of the scroll brought by the elder Mashkawizi. The work demanded great patience, for the figures are not mere ornament but a sequence of memory, each line holding a portion of their creed.

The first mark shows the lake itself, and from it rises a single star with seven rays. Beneath, a woman kneels beside the water. She is called Star-of-the-Sea, mother of Yéhé-ou-shaw. The story tells that light entered her breath as dawn broke, and that the lake itself bore witness to his birth.

Then follow scenes of his wanderings — the healing of a child by laying on of hands, the calming of wind and storm, the teaching of mercy to hunters. Finally, there is the rising figure, his hands pierced, his body shining, ascending toward a sun half-submerged in the water.

When I asked how such likeness could have endured among them, the elder said, ‘Because He was here before your fathers crossed the sea.’ I could not answer. I only felt a trembling, as if the faith I preach had taken root long before my own arrival.

I shall forward both scroll and copy to Bishop Moreau at Saint-Boniface, that he may discern the meaning of this strange concord between Scripture and the forest.”

“Ils disent Yéhé-ou-joua, ou parfois Yéhé-ou-shaw, esprit du vent et de la lumière, celui qui marche sans trace.”
“They say Yéhé-ou-joua, sometimes Yéhé-ou-shaw, Spirit of Wind and Light, he who walks without footprint.”

He wrote: “If I were less afraid of heresy, I would call this the same word I whisper when I say Jésous.”